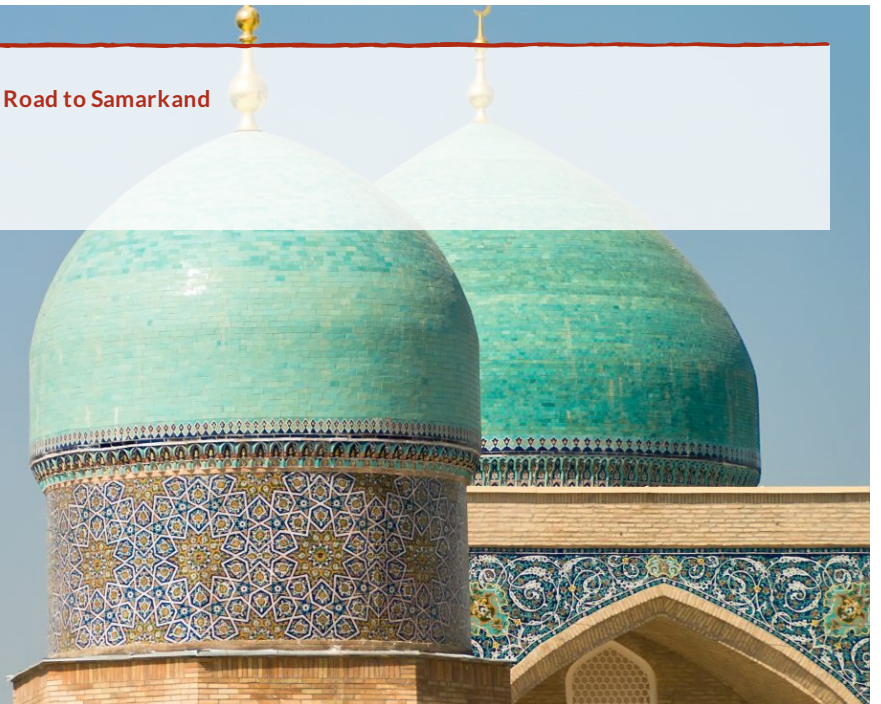


EXPLORE!

Mountain Kingdoms of the Silk Road + Golden Road to Samarkand
24 days

Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan - Trip code KRU



Mountain Kingdoms of the Silk Road + Golden Road to Samarkand

Journey through the remote landscapes of Central Asia along the ancient Silk Road, on this fascinating adventure into the heart of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Experience the wild mountain landscapes of Kyrgyzstan before crossing over the border onto the vast plains of Uzbekistan. Discover mountain villages, stay in traditional yurts as nomads do and mingle with locals in bazaars, as well as see some of the most striking Islamic architecture in the region.

Trip highlights

- ★ **The Silk Road** - Experience the contrasts of the dramatic mountains of Kyrgyzstan and the plains of Uzbekistan
- ★ **Yurt stays** - Sample nomadic life both in on the shores of Song Kul Lake and the desert of Uzbekistan
- ★ **Mountain scenery** - Stand on the shores of sublime alpine lakes surrounded by snow-capped peaks
- ★ **Bokhara** - Admire Islamic architecture and browse bustling bazaars
- ★ **Samarkand** - Discover the cultural gem of the Silk Road

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour in Bishkek

Arrive in Bishkek and check-in at the hotel. Situated dramatically at the foot of the Tien Shan range, Bishkek is a pleasant city with tree lined streets, open squares, many museums and interesting markets afforded with comfortable summer temperatures.



Accommodation: Tien-Shan Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - In Bishkek; afternoon city sightseeing

Customers flying from London arrive in the very early hours of this morning. After a leisurely morning we head out on a sightseeing tour by bus and on foot. We learn about the main monuments and buildings of the city, take a walk through Oak Park and pay a visit to Osh Bazaar. We can enjoy the atmosphere of local life in the Bazaar, where we find fruit and vegetables as well as meat and dairy products, along with souvenirs and handicrafts. A former Silk Road settlement, Kyrgyzstan's capital is a young city starting life as a clay fort built by the Khan of Kokand in 1825 only to be destroyed by the Russians 43 years later. It was rebuilt in 1878 and it is from this time that Bishkek evolved.



Accommodation: Tien-Shan Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse

DAY 3 - Drive to Karakol via Burana Tower and Issyk Kul Lake


Leaving behind the city we head into the heart of this small nation. At its centre lies Issyk Kul Lake, surrounded by the Tien Shan Mountains. Along the way we visit the Burana Tower, all that remains of the ancient city of Balasagun. The tower is believed to be the oldest minaret in Central Asia with a detailed external pattern of relief work in brick. We also see the petroglyphs in Cholpon-Ata where stones vary in size from 30cm to 3 metres. Ancient drawings on the stones date from the 7th century BC to the 3rd century AD, many of them figures of hunters, ibex, goat and reindeer. From here we are also afforded with views of Issyk Kul Lake. We then follow the shore along the north of the lake arriving in the evening in the city of Karakol. Strategically located this was once a Russian military outpost, and the gateway of expeditions into the Tien Shan and beyond. This evening we enjoy a meal cooked by a family from an ethnic minority group, either Dungan or Uygur; both groups are Muslim people of Chinese origin. We not only sample their hospitality but also learn about the traditions and lifestyle.



Accommodation: Green Yard Hotel (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse

 Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 4 - Explore Karakol; walk in Djety Oguz Gorge

The great Russian explorer Prjevalsky died in Karakol before an expedition to Tibet and the small museum dedicated to him gives a great insight into the 19th century Central Asian explorers. In the city we have the opportunity to see the Chinese influence at the Dungan mosque built in 1910 in the style of a Buddhist pagoda (it is made of wood without any nails) whilst the strong Russian influence is evident at the Orthodox Cathedral. After sightseeing in the morning we drive to visit the Valley of Seven Bulls, at Djety-Oguz, where large red sandstone rock formations tower over the valley. During Soviet times this area become known as a health retreat, the sanatorium remains. It became famous when after his first flight in space Yuri Gagarin came here to decompress.



Accommodation: Green Yard Hotel (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Drive to Kochkor; visit waterfalls en route

We continue along the southern shore of Issyk Kul Lake where we make a stop for the opportunity to take a bracing dip into the cold waters of the lake. Continuing on we stop again to view the waterfalls within the dramatic 10km long Barskaun Gorge, as well as having an opportunity to spot birds whilst we enjoy a river-side picnic. Continuing on to Kochkor, a typical Krgyz town where we spend the night in local guesthouses, a great way to get to know the locals. Depending upon size we may find the group split between guesthouses. The women of the town are famous for felt-making and we have the chance to see how 'shirdaks', traditional felt applique rugs, are made by hand.



Accommodation: Kochkor Family Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse

 Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 6 - Spend the night in a traditional yurt at Song Kul Lake

This morning we set off along a dramatic mountain road via Kalmak-Ashu Pass at a lofty 3346m where we can drink in our epic surrounds as we journey to Song Kul. The lake itself is spectacular and the second largest in Kyrgyzstan, situated at an altitude of 3013m above sea level. Surrounded by dramatic snow-covered mountain peaks, it is hidden in a flat, plate-like 'jailoo' (the Kyrgyz word for mountain pasture) which is covered in Edelweiss flowers at certain times of the year. In the summer the shepherds drive the livestock (sheep and/or horses) up into the mountains for pasture and establish a camp for the season. On arrival after settling into our yurts, we will have the opportunity to relax and unwind or perhaps go on a pleasant walk by the lake. Yurts are circular dwelling structures made from felt and insulated with sheepskins, traditionally made to be portable and accommodate 5-6 people. Basic long drop toilets are available in a separate building along with an outdoor basin for washing and are shared with the camp. The experience is very basic, however, gives a unique insight into how local nomads traditionally live and allow us to wake up the next morning in the middle of nowhere.



Accommodation: Song Kul Lake Yurt Camp (or similar)



Simple Yurt



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 7 - Morning at Song Kul; return to Kochkor

This morning you may choose to relax by the lake, which is home to an extraordinary number of birds. Over 60 different species have made their homes on the shores of the lake or in the surrounding area. Alternatively, depending on weather conditions, it may be possible to take a hike into the mountains surrounding the lake. Leaving the camp we walk along grassy, undulating slopes through the Moldo-Toor range. Song Kul Lake offers a spectacular backdrop to the north and we hope to meet locals along the way to get a further glimpse into this traditional lifestyle. The walk takes around 4 hours and reaches an altitude of 3300m. After lunch we leave our yurts and make our way to back to Kochkor for the night, this time taking a different route crossing the Teskey-Topok Pass, arriving in town in the late afternoon. This evening we head out to enjoy a musical Folklore ensemble performance with a wide repertoire of traditional ballads, love songs, work songs and lullabies, accompanied by Kyrgyz national instruments.



Accommodation: Kochkor Family Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 8 - Scenic drive through the mountains to Chichkan Gorge

We spend the day on the road through the wild mountain scenery of the Inner Tien Shan Mountains as we make our way west. We drive through the stunning Suusamyр valley, which is situated at an altitude of 2000-3200m between the dramatic ridges of Kyrgyz and Talas Ala-Too and stretches for some 155km. During the summer alpine grasses cover the whole valley, whilst the winter months see it blanketed with snow. We make stops for photo opportunities where we can along the way as we make out 400km journey to Chichkan Gorge.



Accommodation: Oson Motel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Walking in Chichkan Gorge; free afternoon

We have the day to enjoy a couple of leisurely walks. After breakfast we take a short drive following the course of the Chichkan River to the junction with its tributary, the It-Agar River. From here we start a mostly easy walk on an earth trail which is stony in some sections. The path follows the It-Agar River about 3km uphill, before arriving at the small, but impressive and beautiful alpine Lake of Saz Kul. The walk is around one hour up and half an hour down. We have time to enjoy this picturesque place. Later on we take a short drive to a marble mine which is the starting point of our second easy walk, which takes us up through juniper and spruce forests to a small waterfall which streams into a large rocky bowl. The walk is around half an hour up and 15 minutes down.



Accommodation: Oson Motel (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Drive to Djalal-Abad for homestay

Today we leave Chichkan and again drive through the wild landscapes that make Kyrgyzstan such a memorable place to visit. Our destination is Djalal-Abad, small town at the north-eastern end of the Fergana Valley and nestled in the foothills of the Baba Ata Mountains. The town has a Muslim and mainly Uzbek community, and here we stay in guesthouses where we can experience the genuine hospitality of these mountain people.



Accommodation: Djalal-Abad Family Homestay (or similar)



Simple Homestay



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 11 - Discover Arslanbob, walk through walnut woodland, visit waterfalls

We start the day with a drive 90 kilometres north to the charming village of Arslanbob. We then spend the day accompanied by a local guide, walking through the walnut groves of Arslanbob sometimes referred to as 'The Royal Woods of Kyrgyzstan'. The trees can reach 30m and grow wild on mountain slopes, and walking through the grove rewards us with spectacular views. We visit two waterfalls - a small one (23m) and a much larger one (split into two sections of 60m and 80m). Walking time is around 5-6 hours and is easy to reach the small waterfall, while the trail to the larger waterfall has some steep sections. Later in the afternoon we will make our way back to Djalal-Abad to enjoy some more warm hospitality from the hosts of our guesthouse. We start the day with a drive 90 kilometres north to the charming village of Arslanbob. We then spend the day accompanied by a local guide, walking through the walnut groves of Arslanbob sometimes referred to as 'The Royal Woods of Kyrgyzstan'. The trees can reach 30m and grow wild on mountain slopes, and walking through the grove rewards us with spectacular views. We visit two waterfalls - a small one (23m) and a much larger one (split into two sections of 60m and 80m). Walking time is around 5-6 hours and is easy to reach the small waterfall, while the trail to the larger waterfall has some steep sections. Later in the afternoon we will make our way back to Djalal-Abad to enjoy some more warm hospitality from the hosts of our guesthouse.



Accommodation: Djalal-Abad Family Homestay (or similar)



Simple Homestay



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 12 - Drive to Osh; cross border into Uzbekistan and drive to Fergana City

Leaving village life of Arslanbob behind we make our way into the expansive Fergana Valley and the city of Osh, which according to legend was founded by either King Solomon or Alexander the Great! Although it dates back to the 5th century BC, very little remains to suggest its ancient past and today, it is Kyrgyzstan's second city and very much soviet in feel. We make a lunch stop here. We then make our way to checkpoint 'Dostlik', on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, where we undergo immigration and customs formalities and bid farewell to our Kyrgyz leader as we are handed over to our tour leader from Uzbekistan. From the border we drive to our overnight stop in Fergana City.



Accommodation: Club 777 (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Drive via ceramic workshop in Rishtan to Tashkent

This morning we head out to start the final leg of our journey. We must travel by convoy of smaller vehicles as we cross over Kamchik Pass at 2300m. We make a stop at Rishtan town, famous for its ceramics, where we visit a workshop. The Silk Road introduced Chinese ceramics to Uzbekistan, and while craftsman initially emulated Chinese designs, they soon evolved their own, now traditional, Uzbek geometric style. Later we make a brief stop in Kokand town, the former residence of Kokand Khan, before finally arriving in Tashkent. We also take a ride for 2-3 stops on the Tashkent Metro, which boasts some flamboyantly decorated stations.



Accommodation: Hotel Uzbekistan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Free morning. Afternoon city sightseeing; ride the flamboyant Metro

This morning we head out with a local guide to explore Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, which has been on this site for over 2000 years. Although much of it was destroyed in the earthquake of 1966 it has been rebuilt as a modern model city, with spacious avenues and ever-present fountains to cool the air. Our sightseeing tour includes various points of interest around the city, like the Independence Square, Navoi Theatre, Old City, Abu Khasim Madrassah and the Earthquake Monument. The afternoon is free.



Accommodation: Hotel Uzbekistan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 15 - Fly to Urgench in western Uzbekistan and drive to the ancient city of Khiva

Today, we have a little free time to explore more of the city before our flight to Urgench in the early evening. A further 40-minute bus journey will take us to the remarkable ancient city of Khiva, which will be our base for the next two nights. The early history of this area is sketchy. We do know that, by the time the Arabs arrived in the 8th century, Khiva was one of three important cities which dominated the region. The city's strategic location on the Volga branch of the Silk Route made it a much sought-after imperial asset, with the British and Russians vying for sovereignty throughout the 19th century as part of the 'Great Game'. In 1873, it fell to the Russians as both Samarkand and Bokhara had already done. A 1970s Soviet conservation programme restored much of the city, turning it into what is effectively an open air museum.



Accommodation: Orient Star Khiva (Formerly Madrassah Khiva) (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 16 - In Khiva, visit the Old Citadel; free afternoon

On this morning's walking tour, we may well feel like we are stepping into a scene from the film 'Arabian Nights' as we explore the majestic Old Citadel. This 12th century fortress dominated the city before a palace, harem, barracks and mosques were constructed. It is worth climbing the steps of the Dzhuma Minaret for a panoramic view of the maze of streets below. The rest of the afternoon has been left free to explore the mosques, tombs and palaces of this well-preserved city, which has hardly changed since ancient times. This evening, you may choose to explore a bit more of the city after dark, when magical moonlit silhouettes make it even more spectacular.



Accommodation: Orient Star Khiva (Formerly Madrassah Khiva) (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 17 - Scenic drive through vast plains to Bokhara

Today's drive to the fabled city of Bokhara will take up the day, but is broken up with plenty of stops as we travel through expansive plains and past old caravanserais. As home to the famous Islamic poets, Firdausi and Rudaki, Bokhara is considered by some to be the 'Bastion of Islam'. The town retains much of its Uzbek character and has more than 140 unique monuments. We will spend the next three nights here to explore this fabulous city.



Accommodation: Hotel Mosque Baland (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 18 - In Bokhara, discover blue-tiled domes and minarets; learn about the city's history

Today's day of sightseeing starts off with a walking tour. Highlights include the Lyab-i Hauz which once supplied the city's water; the striking blue-tiled Abdul Khan madrassah and the 9th century Mghoki Arrar Mosque. We will also visit the Kalyan minaret, which, as the tallest monument in town, is known as the 'Tower of Death' because prisoners were once hurled to their death from here. In addition, we will take in the trading domes that are the most famous symbol of Bokharan architecture. This afternoon, we will drive to The Ark - a massive citadel which was used as a fortress from the 5th century until its fall to the Russians in 1920. Today it houses several small museums connected with Bokhara's history. Bokhara was the site of the imprisonment for two British soldiers during 'The Great Game' - an epic battle fought between Victorian Britain and Tsarist Russia across the vastness of Central Asia. We also plan to visit the summer palace of the Emirs of Bokhara, which is known as the 'Palace of Moon-like Stars'. Here, we will see the famous White Hall, which took 30 architects two years to construct. Finally, we will take in the Char Minar Mosque - the impressive entrance to a now-demolished madrassah, and wander the backstreets of the old town maybe stopping off at a 'chaikhana', a local tea house.



Accommodation: Hotel Mosque Baland (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 19 - Free day to explore Bokhara's sights further

Today has been left free for you to spend as you wish. You may choose to climb the 46 metre-high Kalyan minaret for stunning views over the city. Alternatively, you may like to explore the Taqi-Sarrafon market - one of the four domed bazaars in Bokhara. Used as a money exchange during the height of the Silk Road, it is now home to plenty of souvenir shops.



Accommodation: Hotel Mosque Baland (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 20 - Drive to Yangikaskan desert camp for overnight in a yurt; optional camel ride

This morning, we will drive a short distance to Gijduvan - a town celebrated for its crafts and trade since the 10th century. Here, we will visit the famous ceramic centre. Our next stop is Karmana, where we plan to visit the 10th century Mir-Said Bakhram Mausoleum. Heading off the main highway, we continue our journey north across the desert to Nurata. Famous for its sacred Chashma Spring, the town attracts visitors from across the Islamic World. According to legend, this healing spring, containing gold, silver and bromide, was formed by a meteorite hitting the ground. Whilst in Nurata, we plan to have lunch in a local house and see the remains of Alexander the Great's Karazy Fortress, affording excellent views of the desert landscape. This afternoon, we head to our overnight base in Yangikaskan, where we have the opportunity to go on a short optional camel ride, or simply relax and take in the remote surroundings. Tonight's desert camp accommodation is in yurts, typical of those used by the nomadic people of Central Asia. Yurts are circular dwelling structures made from felt and insulated with sheepskins, traditionally made to be portable. The yurt camp consists of 20 traditional felt yurts each accommodating sleep five people. Mattresses, pillows, linen, blankets and towels are provided. There are 8 shower, 4 (western style) WC cabins and 2 wash basins. Each yurt is equipped with a 220v / 50Hz power socket and an electric lamp. Meals are served either in the ventilated restaurant hut or open air under shade, and a campfire is lit in the evening. Summer temperatures (from May to September) can reach 30-50 degrees at noon settling at 20-25 degrees at night

time. During the spring and in autumn the desert can be very cold at night.



Accommodation: Yangigazgan Yurt (or similar)



Simple Yurt



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 21 - Drive to Samarkand; afternoon exploration of the city's monuments including Registan Square

We spend this morning driving to Samarkand. Stormed by Alexander the Great and reduced to ashes by Genghis Khan, Samarkand was nevertheless transformed into the most glittering city in Transoxiana by Tamerlane, who made it his capital in the 14th century. Even today, the monumental scale of the buildings overwhelms visitors. This afternoon, we will visit Registan, a majestic square framed on three sides by huge blue tiled madrassahs. We will also visit the Gur Emir, the gold-ceilinged tomb of Tamerlane himself.



Accommodation: Zarina Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 22 - In Samarkand, discover magnificent mosques and mausoleums; free afternoon to explore further

This morning's sightseeing is accompanied by a local guide and takes us to the Shah-i- Zinda - a beautifully-tiled necropolis of tombs, mosques and mausoleums belonging to Tamerlane's family, friends and the prophet Mohammad's cousin. We will also visit the Ulug-Beg Observatory, considered to have been one of the finest observatories in the Islamic World. It was here that Ulug-Beg, the great medieval astronomer, built his gigantic sextant which enabled him to calculate the length of a year to within just 10 seconds. We see the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, once the largest in Central Asia; it was built by Tamerlane with loot from Indian campaigns and named after his favourite Mongolian wife. This afternoon has been left free to explore more of the city at your own pace. You may choose to soak up the atmosphere of the charming old town by wandering its winding, narrow alleys whilst traditionally-dressed locals perform their daily rituals. A stop-off at a tea house offers the opportunity to relax with a cup of traditional 'kokchai' tea. Alternatively, you may choose to visit ancient Afrosiab - the original site of the town in north east Samarkand, dating back to the late Stone Age.



Accommodation: Zarina Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 23 - In Samarkand, free morning; afternoon high-speed train to Tashkent

Today, there is more free time for further exploration. Later this afternoon, we transfer to the train station for our modern high speed train back to Tashkent. Arriving just after 7pm, we will have time to enjoy our last evening of the tour.



Accommodation: Hotel Uzbekistan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



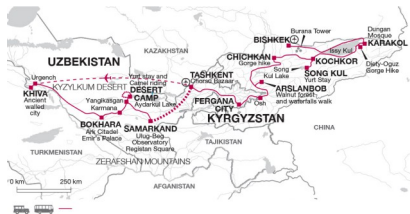
Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 24 - Tour ends in Tashkent

Our tour ends after breakfast this morning.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

The epic adventure combines our new Mountain Kingdoms of the Silk Road (KR) tour with our best selling The Golden Road to Samarkand (UZ) tour and is perfect for travellers who want to get under the skin of the region and experience the common history of these former Soviet states as well as contrast the incredible mountain scenery of Kyrgyzstan with the desert plains and rolling steppes of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has been named as one of the top emerging destinations of 2015.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 23
Lunch: 1
Dinner: 7



Transport

Bus
4WD
Flight



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader(s)
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

6 nights simple guesthouse
2 nights simple homestay
6 nights simple hotel
7 nights standard hotel
2 nights simple yurt

Trip information

Country information

Kyrgyzstan Holidays & Tours

Climate

Summer day temperatures can reach a maximum of 28°C in the lower slopes of the Tien Shan in July and August, although, as with any mountain area, temperatures can vary greatly and you should be prepared for extremes of weather. Night temperatures drop dramatically, possibly reaching zero degrees at night.

Time difference to GMT

+5

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Islam, Russian Orthodox.

Language

Kyrgyz, Russian.

Uzbekistan Trips

Climate

Spring and autumn are the best times to visit, when the temperatures are mild and there is the chance of occasional rains. April can bring colourful blooms to the normally barren desert landscapes, whilst summer days in the cities and desert can be very hot, when the temperatures can reach as high as 50°.

Time difference to GMT

+5

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Islam, predominantly Sunni, Eastern Orthodox

Language

Uzbek, Russian, Tajik

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Chichkan Gorge - Afternoon forest walk (includes transportation and 2 hours guided walk) 10EUR per person (based on a minimum of 6 people) Samarkand - Day trip to Shakhrisabz by a/c car (max 3 people) US\$60 per car (price includes transportation, entrance fees and city tour)

Clothing

Light-weight cottons are most suitable for the hot summers of Central Asia with warmer clothing including waterproof/windproof jacket needed for time spent in the mountains. At any time of the year a good fleece or down jacket plus gloves and hat are recommended for yurt stays. A pair of thermals is good as an extra layer, or for wearing in bed. The region is traditionally Muslim so brief shorts and skirts, or clothes that are revealing or tight offend local sensibilities. Women should bring a headscarf as this is necessary for some mosque visits. Bring swimming gear.

Footwear

Good quality, comfortable shoes/trainers and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack will be needed as you will not have access to your main luggage during the overnight Yurt stay.

Equipment

Bring a small torch, a water bottle, insect repellent and a small travel towel as some of the yurt camps do not supply towels. Although the yurt camps do provide thick blankets you may wish to bring your own sleeping bag for additional warmth as it can become very cold at night. If using the local blankets then a sleeping bag liner or sheet should make your stay more comfortable.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow approximately £20 for tips. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

Kyrgyzstan Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£3

Dinner price

£5

Beer price

£1

Water price

£0.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Som.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Take your spending money in US\$ cash, as many bars and shops only accept hard currency (and often lack the facility to change travellers cheques). We recommend you take new (post 1990), good condition dollar bills. Large notes may attract a slightly higher exchange rate than small ones.

Where To Exchange

In major towns. Your tour leader will advise you.

ATM Availability

Very limited do not rely on this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Limited to major restaurants and stores in cities only.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended for these tours.

Uzbekistan Trips

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£6.00 - 10.00

Beer price

£1.4

Water price

£0.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Sum

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Take your spending money in US\$ cash, as many bars and shops only accept hard currency (and often lack the facility to change travellers cheques). We recommend you take new (post 1990), good condition dollar bills in small denominations.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Very limited, do not rely upon this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Limited usually to larger outlets and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Flight

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Kyrgyzstan: Accommodation in Kyrgyzstan is very simple and the guesthouses we use may have shared bathrooms. We spend a night in traditional yurts with limited washing facilities. Although the yurt camps do provide thick blankets you may wish to bring your own sleeping bag for additional warmth as it can become very cold at night. If using the local blankets then a sleeping bag liner or sheet should make your stay more comfortable. Uzbekistan: We've chosen our accommodation in Uzbekistan to reflect different aspects of the country; from its nomadic roots, through Islamic heritage to modern day Uzbekistan. Rooms throughout are en suite and the standard is generally simple. We have tried to choose smaller locally run hotels for most of the trip rather than the bigger tourist hotels in the hope that this will provide a more personal authentic experience. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be somewhat erratic however and although the welcome is always warm, service levels may be less efficient than you may be used to.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Uzbekistan: Visas are required for all nationalities for Uzbekistan and must be obtained prior to departure. Some nationalities (not UK citizens) may be required to provide an authorisation letter from the Uzbek authorities in support of their visa application. Please contact your nearest embassy to check the requirements. If you require an authorisation letter please contact Explore immediately. We strongly recommend that you obtain a visa that expires a day after the tour finishes to allow for flight delays. Kyrgyzstan: Nationals of the EU, Canada, Australia and the United States don't need a visa to enter and stay for a maximum of 60 days. Other nationalities may require a single entry visa and should consult the relevant consulate or www.kyrgyzvisa.com for more information.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United

Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Kyrgyzstan Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, infectious hepatitis, typhoid and polio. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Uzbekistan Trips

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on the need for and different prophylaxis available against malaria. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
